



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PANEL

9.30am to 11.45am

26 September 2012

Present: Councillors Bremner (chair), Carlo (vice chair), Brociek-Coulton, Grahame, Grenville, Lubbock, Sands (S) (substitute for Councillor Sands (M)) and Stammers

Apologies: Councillor Sands (M)

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meetings held on 25 July 2012.

2. REVIEW OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2012

The planning team leader (policy) presented the report, and together with the head of planning services, answered members' questions. In relation to the joint core strategy (JCS), he advised members of amendments to the "milestones", set out in the table on page 34 of the agenda papers. He pointed out that public consultation on the revised submission content document had been extended and the period quoted should consequently be changed from "August to October 2012" to "August to November 2012". The remainder of the JCS timetable had also been adjusted and subsequent dates had therefore been amended as follows:

- Submission of revised JCS content February 2013
- Examination of revised submission content May 2013
- Adoption of re-examined remitted JCS content July/August 2013

An updated version of annex 1 showing the council's local development scheme for Norwich, 2012 to 2014 programme, taking account of these changes, was circulated at the meeting.

During discussion Councillor Carlo suggested that the council sought legal advice, perhaps through the Local Government Association, on whether lower level policy documents could be brought forward which did not follow the principles of, or introduced new policies to, the parent document. She suggested that the council might want to adopt a different approach to energy efficiency to the policies contained in the JCS. Members were advised that any departures from higher level local policy documents would need to be justified by objective evidence and that legal advice on this point could be considered.

Members were advised that the local development scheme programme would be published together with a “Statement of community involvement”, which would set out details of the dates and timescales for the consultations on the emerging plans.

RESOLVED to agree the local development scheme (as updated above) and recommend that cabinet approves it for publication under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by section 111 of the Localism Act 2011).

3. EXTENSIONS TO HOUSES – ADVICE NOTE

The planning team leader (policy) presented the report and said that there was a need to produce an advisory note for members of the public considering extending their dwellings which would also reduce the number of enquiries to the council about this issue. The guidance note was based on good practice and compliant with existing and emerging policies.

Discussion ensued in which it was suggested that the most common objection to house extensions was from neighbours concerned loss of light and amenity. The government’s changes to permitted development rights meant that larger extensions could be built without planning permission. The advice note would contribute to good practice and design and sought to minimise the impact on neighbours. Members asked that members of the public considering building work to their dwelling were advised to be mindful of their neighbours and not have building work done at unsocial hours. Members expressed some concern that an existing badly designed porch in a row of terraced houses set a precedent for other similar porches to be permitted.

In response to a question the head of planning services explained that Article 4 directions were used by local planning authorities to remove permitted development rights, usually in conservation areas, to preserve the appearance of buildings and prevent the amenity of the area being damaged by unsympathetic changes. Local development orders, conversely, were used to give additional permitted development rights for alterations which normally needed permission. The council had implemented an Article 4 direction for windows in some parts of conservation areas to preserve the appearance of these areas. Permitted development rights could also be removed in advance by condition, for instance the authority had used this in Bowthorpe and other parts of the city. Members were also advised that if a legal covenant existed on property this could not be overridden by planning permissions and permitted development rights.

RESOLVED to recommend to cabinet that it approves the “Extensions to houses – advisory note” as a development management guidance document subject to inserting text regarding that “adverse effects on neighbours during the construction process should be minimised”.

4. PARLIAMENTARY WRITTEN STATEMENT ON HOUSING AND GROWTH AND DCLG CONSULTATION ON RENEGOTIATION OF S106 AGREEMENTS

The head of planning services presented the report and together with the planning team leader (policy) answered members' questions. Members also received a presentation which demonstrated that existing permitted development rights applying to dwellings already allowed a very wide range of alterations to be made. The government's proposed changes would extend the size allowance for rear extensions and meant that some proposals previously refused because of impact on neighbours could not now be resisted. However the changes proposed also offered the opportunity for some of the anomalies and loopholes in the existing permitted development regulations to be addressed.

Discussion ensued in which members considered the draft response to the government's consultation, particularly in relation to S106 agreements and stimulating development of vacant sites.

RESOLVED to note the report in relation to the government's package of measures to support economic growth and endorse the responses as set out in appendix 1 of the report.

5. RESULTS OF THE TRAVEL TO WORK SURVEY

The environmental strategy manager presented the report and answered members' questions.

In response to requests from members, the environmental strategy manager undertook to find out if councillors were eligible for the cycle to work scheme and the discount for staff that had been negotiated with First Bus. Discussion ensued on the introduction of pool bikes for travel around at work and it was suggested that one of these should be available for employees to use at Swanton Road. The environmental strategy manager said that the use could be monitored to ensure that the bikes were in the best locations to maximise use. Members also discussed the use of pool cars and the introduction of telemetrics which would provide data to improve fuel use. Members were also advised that other large employers in the city, such as the University of East Anglia, were implementing similar measures as part of its travel plan. Members also noted that car sharing was not feasible unless the city council entered into a scheme with other employers.

During discussion members considered the responses to the travel to work survey. A member pointed out that green travel plans were not a new innovation and that there were some employers that stipulated in employment advertisements that prospective employees used non car modes of transport to and from work.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the comments of the panel on the results of the council's travel to work survey and draft green travel plan;

- (2) ask the environmental strategy manager to liaise with the head of HR on the details of the cycle to work scheme and the discounted bus tickets available from First bus and report back to members.

6. CARBON MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

The environmental strategy manager presented the report and explained that there had been a vacancy in the team which meant that some projects had been completed this financial year.

During discussion the environmental strategy manager answered members' questions and explained that the council's carbon management programme related only to the buildings that it occupied in the delivery of its service and not its other assets. The display energy certificate for City Hall had originally been rated as a "G" and had now been awarded a "D". It was hoped that the council could achieve an improvement which would be reflected in the amount it received from the feed in tariff from the PV panels.

RESOLVED to note the report.

7. PHOTO-VOLTAIC (PV) PANELS ON CITY HALL ROOF

The environmental strategy manager presented the report and explained that despite the dull summer the panels performed favourably in May and August producing around three-quarters of the possible optimal output.

RESOLVED to note the report.

CHAIR